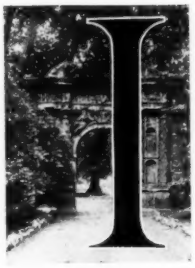
THE AMERICAN ARCHITECT

VOL. C. WEDNESDAY, JULY 19, 1911 No. 1856

THE EVOLUTION OF ART IN AMERICA*

By CLAUDE BRAGDON, F. A. I. A.



I HAVE accepted your invitation to meet with you tonight, first, for the pleasure it gives me to be with you all; and second, that I may bear witness to the same order of truths which I have endeavored to bring to your attention at the Philadelphia Convention of 1901. I am considerably older than I was then, and more experienced. In the intervening time I have reversed my views on some subjects, revised them on not a few; but about one thing I have the cocksureness, the keen enthusiasm, of youth; I believe in the imminence of an art evolution in America which shall not be restricted to statues and pictures and insincere essays in dry-as-dust architectural styles, but which will permeate the whole social and economic fabric and make it palpitate with the rhythm of a larger, a more beautiful life, which will seek and find a new language of symbols to voice the joy of the soul, freed from the thrall of an iron age of materialism and fronting the unimaginable splendors of the spiritual life.

Of the imminence of such an awakening I am surer than I was before. Indeed, I believe it to have already occurred: the eyes, at least, are opened, though the body —the hand, even—may not have stirred. Before, I made a prophecy: tonight I but testify to a condition already existent. The world—the world of thought and emotion from whence flow all acts and events—is no longer decrepit and decaying, but like the angels, it is advancing towards the springtime of its youth. Down the ringing grooves of change "we sweep into the younger day."

*An address delivered at the Annual Dinner of The Architectural League of America, June 22, 1911.

I have sometimes been reproached by my friends for my absorption in mysticism, Oriental religious philosophy, and the fourth dimension of space,—by my friends, but by my conscience never, because I believe these occupations and interests of my leisure to be vitally related to the art I practise. It is largely because I am so enthusiastic an architect that I am so ardent a theosophist. The explanation of this is simple: Architecture is the concrete spatial presentment or expression of the soul of a people. If that soul be petty and sordid—"stirred like a child, by little things" —no great architecture is possible, because great architecture can image only greatness. Before any great architecture can be born into the modern world, the soul must be aroused. Then Beauty and Mystery will again make their dwelling among men; the Voiceless will speak in music, and the Formless will spin rhythmic patterns on the loom of space.

For every æsthetic awakening there must be a religious awakening. This is not mere empty phrase-making: it is the very truth of things, as I call history to witness. Every great religious movement found an art expression eloquent of it. When religion languished, such things as Versailles and the Paris Opera House were possible, but not such things as the Parthenon, or Notre Dame. The time-defying temples of Egypt were built for the celebration of the rites of the religion of Egypt; so also, in the case of Greece. Roman architecture was more widely secular, but Rome's noblest structure, the Pantheon, was a religious edifice.

The Moors, inflamed by religious ardor, swept across Europe, blazing their trail with mosques and palaces conceived, seemingly, in some ecstatic state of dream.

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The Renaissance, tainted though it was by worldliness, found still its art inspiration in sacred themes, and recorded its beginning and its end in two mighty religious monuments: Brunelleschi's and Michael Angelo's domes, "wrought in a sad sincerity" by deeply religious men. The same truth—that art and religion go ever hand in hand—receives even greater confirmation in the Orient, where art is scarcely secular at all, but a symbolical language framed and employed for the expression of religious truths.

This law: that the rod of spirituality and not the rose of materialism distils the precious attar of great art, is permanently true and perennially applicable; for laws of this order do not change from age to age, however various their manifestation. The inference is plain—and this is the pith and point of my remarks—until we become a religious people great architecture is far from us. Our power will refuse to translate itself to beauty, our ingenuity will waste itself on trifles, our cleverness will come to naught. But I believe that we are becoming a religious people: not religious in the narrow sense, but in the broad sense, in which churches and creeds, forms and ceremonies, play little part. The religion I refer to is the search of the human heart for something greater than itself which is still itself; it is the religion of Brotherhood, its creed is love, its ritual, kindness.

This transformed and transforming religion of the West, the tardy fruit of the teachings of the Christ, now actively germinating in the secret hearts of men, will reap from the meagre centuries all that is fruitful, and throw away the chaff. Science will reveal the manner in which spirit weaves its seven-fold veil of illusion, and art will become for the soul a looking-glass.

One precious tincture of this World-Religion our civilization and our past cannot supply; the secret of it is the particular heritage of Asia, cherished in her brooding bosom for uncounted centuries until, by the operation of the law of cycles, the time should come for the giving of it to the West. That secret is Quietism, the method of self-development whereby one is enabled to perceive the shining of the Inward Light. This is achieved by daily discipline in stilling the mind and directing the consciousness inward instead of outward—a thing comparatively easy for the Asiatic, but difficult for us, whose minds are restless and centrifugal.

This Quietism, which brings inward vision, the contribution of the East to the spiritual life of the West, finds its perfect parallel in Oriental art, for the same differences inhere between the art of the West and the art of the East that exist in consciousness. The consciousness of the West concerns itself with the visible world almost exclusively, and western art is naturally characterized by an almost slavish fidelity to the ephemeral appearances of things—the records of particular moods and moments. The consciousness of the East, on the other hand, being subjective, introspective, its art concerns itself with permanent rather than passing aspects; we are led into a world in which there are no accidents, no shadows, a world in which things exist, not for their own sake, but as symbols or apparitions of a more real world of essential life. The Oriental artist avoids, as far as possible, trivial and individual rhythms, seeking always the fundamental rhythm of nature and of the larger, deeper life.

Now this quality of rhythmic vitality, which is so earnestly sought and so highly prized in Oriental art, is the very quality which our art and our architecture most conspicuously lack. To the eye sensitive to rhythm, our art appears to be at the awkward age. The six canons of Chinese æsthetics, which I shall give you in closing, formulated centuries ago on the other side of the world, are as useful and true here and now as they ever have been. Believe me, they have their lessons for us. The first (and most important) is: "Rhythmic Vitality, or the life movement of the spirit through the rhythm of things." The second is, "Organic Structure." The third, "The Law of Conformity with Nature." The fourth, "Appropriate Coloring." The fifth, "Arrangement," and the sixth "Finish."

Ponder these laws: try particularly to realize in yourselves "Rhythmic Vitality, or the life movement of the spirit through the rhythm of things," and you will find yourselves more and more becoming a vehicle whereby that spirit manifests itself in the world.

COLOR IN STREET ARCHITECTURE

IN a paper read by Mr. W. Davidson before the Townplanning Conference in London last spring, the question of color in street architecture was discussed and some valuable ideas advanced.

Certain considerations that need to be reckoned with, were in the judgment of Mr. Davidson, often overlooked. Questions of the relation of our street color to the amount of sunlight received were regarded as most important. There was also to be considered the effect of climate on material.

Commenting on the fact that Great Britain has not the almost ever bright blue sky of Spain and Italy, Mr. Davidson said:

> "Does it follow for this reason that the popular notion that we must abandon bright colors here is correct? We certainly cannot have color without light, but strong sunlight destroys color. An Eastern noontide sun shining on the walls of a marble building destroys all local color, and we only see a white glare. And, again, the sun does not always shine in Spain and Italy. We have seen the rain driving for days across the Bay of Naples, and the mists floating up from the lagoon wrapping round the domes of St. Mark's in Venice, the streets of Florence swept by rain, and the venerable churches of Ravenna standing gaunt and gloomy in the cold, grey mist driving up from the sea. Under these conditions the external mosaics were more beautiful and the Della Robbias more dainty and gem-like, for at such times we saw the full strength and beauty of the color."

That the limitations of material need to be frankly admitted in their relation to climate is undoubted. It is essential that we allow for the inevitable alteration of color due to climatic conditions. These features, together with those of setting and aspect, would control the selection of color and the method of its application, whether of paint or stain, or the more enduring brick and terra cotta.

Texture also plays a most important part in the application of color in our street architecture. This fact was referred to by Mr. Davidson as follows:—

> "Again, we must not forget the effect of texture on color; how different a color applied to a smooth, polished, plaster surface is from the same when it is applied to a rough, uneven face; how it is most necessary to make sure that there is a fraternal feeling between the materials used in the same façade! To see, for instance, that a polished base of light cold granite does not, as it may easily do, cut the design of a building in two, thus destroying the whole unity of what might otherwise be a fine composition."

Fortunately for the man out of doors in America, the sombre tones of our buildings are giving place to brighter and more enlivening hues.

This result, like many another desirable innovation is secured by the architect, ably seconded by the makers of materials. Certain sections of New York have already received careful and thoughtful consideration in the selection of material, its texture and color. The result is so decidedly satisfactory that we hope the future will bring a more general treatment of this character.

RUGS OF THE ORIENT*

TO most people an Eastern rug is like Peter Bell's primrose—a simple rug it is to him and it is nothing more. To the man who either is a collector of rugs, or whose business is their importation and sale, a rug is like the open pages of a book. He—fortunate man—reads not only the history of the origin and probable date of beginning of the small carpet before him, but he readily deciphers the message that is so often cunningly interwoven in the fabric.

The popularity of the rug has been attained by something more than the fact that it is an adaptable and convenient floor or wall covering. Its unlimited range of color scale and its variation in size has made it possible to include the rug harmoniously in every scheme of decoration. Whether in the heavier weaves or the lighter, whether on the floor, draped in doorways, hung over balustrades, suspended against

*Rugs of the Orient, by C. R. Clifford. Full bound, 106 pp. 9½ x 13, price, $3.00. New York: Clifford & Lawton Co.

the wall or as a covering for large pieces of furniture, the rug when intelligently selected is a most important feature of the interior decoration.

It is well to have something more than a superficial knowledge of so important an accessory to the æsthetic character of our surroundings and it is therefore with much satisfaction that we commend to the architect the very interesting and instructive book prepared by Mr. Clifford.

The author has brought to his task not only a very complete knowledge of his subject, but has fortunately been able to supplement this with an artistic appreciation of the rugs of the East.

The work may be said to meet the practical requirements of every one in search of information on this interesting subject of Oriental rugs. It embraces not only the literature of the subject, but covers the art for the antiquarian as well. The subject is an interesting and deeply educational one. The man who seeks to know the Oriental rug, will in the pursuit of such knowledge acquire a wide range of historical facts, will become something of an ethnologist, and deeply versed in the ancient art of hand weaving and the people that practiced it.

If men must have fads—and a good fad properly pursued, adds zest to life and relieves the world of the monotony of our every day occupation—the collecting of Oriental rugs is certainly a good one. If he sets out to know all that is to be learned of each individual purchase before he acquires another, there is not much chance of his collecting so large a number as to make his fad a burden.

THE CURRENT ARCHITECTURAL PRESS

HE principal article in *The Western Architect* for July, treats of the early Architecture of New England and is by Mr. Ashton R. Willard. This subject has had thorough illustration and description in "The Georgian Period," a work with which most of our readers are familiar. The present article offers little new either in text or pictures.

The principal subject illustrated in this issue is a Presbyterian Church in St. Joseph, Mo., by Messrs. Eckel & Boscher, shown in THE AMERICAN ARCHITECT of July 5th. Other illustrations are The Boston Building, Salt Lake City, Utah, Mr. Henry Ives Cobb, Architect, a somewhat irrational façade of a Y. M. C. A. building at Carlisle, Pa., by M. I. Kast, together with some picturesque California bungalows, Mr. G. A. Howard, Architect.

The Brickbuilder for June contains illustrations of a variety of well selected and reproduced subjects.

The Christ Congregational Church in New York City, designed by Messrs. Hoppen & Koen, is a very interesting solution of the placing on a triangular site of a church parish house and rectory. An important example of recently completed ecclesiastical architecture in the South is the Presbyterian Church at Chattanooga, Tenn., of which Messrs. Bearden & Foreman and McKim, Mead & White, are the associated architects. The plans and working drawings of this church were shown in THE AMERICAN ARCHITECT some two years ago. It is interesting to note in the photographs of the completed structure how very successfully the drawings have been carried out. This church stands as one of the most pleasing built in the South during recent years.

A Town Hall at Westwood, Mass., illustrated in this issue, while in most respects a well designed building, fails in what we regard an essential characteristic, that of suggesting the purpose of its erection. It might readily be mistaken for a school house or something quite different from a Town Hall, if its title were omitted.

The Technical High School at Newton, Mass., Mr. George Newton, Architect, the Merchants National Bank, Salem, by Little

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, CHATTANOOGA, TENN.
BEARDEN & FOREMAN AND MCKIM, MEAD & WHITE, ASSOCIATED ARCHITECTS. (From *The Brickbuilder*)

MERCHANTS' NATIONAL BANK, SALEM, MASS.
LITTLE & BROWN, ARCHITECTS
(From *The Brickbuilder*)

& Brown, and the Gymnasium at Syracuse University, Revels & Hallenbeck, Architects, are other subjects illustrated in this issue.

The text has for its leading article a description of Compton Wynyates, in Warwickshire, England, by Arthur G. Byne. Mr. Byne writes from personal association with this interesting example of Tudor Gothic domestic architecture. This article is well illustrated. The second paper of Mr. Sturgis' valuable series on "Some Problems in School Planning," treats of the Secondary Schools. Mr. Charles L. Hubbard writes on "The Heating and Ventilation of Theatres," always a subject of

TRUTH. GROUP ON SOUTH SIDE OF QUEEN VICTORIA MEMORIAL, LONDON
(From *The International Studio*)

ENTRANCE DETAIL OF A HOUSE IN MACON, GA.
MESSRS. HENTZ & REID, ARCHITECTS
(From *The Architectural Record*)

large practical importance and especially so when treated by so authoritative a writer.

A series of illustrations (the best we have seen of the subject among the many magazines that have given it space) of the recently dedicated Queen Victoria Memorial in London, are a feature of *The International Studio* for July. This very important addition to England's monuments has been perhaps more diversely criticized than any similar work for some time past. The critics either declare it to be all good or all bad. Judged from the very excellent photographs of the ensemble and all of the details, the work would seem to be no better, nor any worse, than many similar attempts to memorialize the departed great that are so common in English cities. The sculptured figures appear to lack virility in modeling and have an isolation in grouping that makes the general effect a four-sided one and not altogether satisfactory. But at any rate, it appears to have met with the approval of King George, who has conferred the order of Knighthood on Thomas Brock, the sculptor.

SOUTH CHURCH, PARISH HOUSE AND RECTORY, PARK AVE., NEW YORK

CRAM, GOODHUE & FERGUSON, ARCHITECTS

(From *Architecture*)

A number of important paintings and examples of sculpture seen at recent exhibitions in this country and Europe are well illustrated in this issue. An interesting article is an appreciation of Birge Harrison, the landscape painter. It is illustrated by many examples of Mr. Harrison's important canvases. Of the group of men who are by their work further elevating the already high plane of landscape painting in this country, Mr. Harrison is perhaps most prominent. His art has the essential quality of truthfulness.

The Architectural Record for July has a cover that atones in a measure for some of its predecessors. This issue is called "The Southern Number." The leading article, "The Old and the New South," by Mr. Russell F. Whitehead, is a well written consideration of architecture in the Southern States. As would be inferred by one who is familiar with architecture in the South, the subject offers many allurements, and also possesses many points that are best passed with but casual notice. In no field of architectural endeavor have our professional brethren experienced so many difficulties in effecting their aims and ideals as in the South.

That so much good has been accomplished during the past two decades, is because of the indomitable energy and ability of the men who are leading the Southern people to better and more rational ideas of the value of architecture as an asset.

It is interesting and convenient to have grouped together the best examples of recent good architecture in the South, even though plans are lacking. While most of the work shown has had previous illustration, the series of monographs that are being presented in *The Architectural Record* are in keeping with the name of the publication, and form convenient and handy guides to localities and the work of prominent firms, even if they do not combine any novelty in presentation.

Part VIII of Mr. Montgomery Schuyler's series on "The Architecture of American

(*Continued on page 28*)

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FRONTISPIECE:

Fountain in Palermo, Italy.

MAYOR GAYNOR'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE STILWELL BILL

MAYOR GAYNOR'S action in disapproving the obnoxious Stilwell bill, designed to locate the new County Court House in City Hall Park, New York, was not unexpected and is highly commendable, but it is doubtful if some of the remarks with which his action was accompanied will be received with general satisfaction. For example, his reported observation that "my experience is that the people are not bothering much about it" does not seem to be justified by the facts. While the average citizen has not the facilities for giving wide publicity to his wishes and opinions that are possessed by those in office, it would appear in this instance that almost every available means had been utilized in making plain the people's desire to preserve the ancient area of this park unencumbered. Committees representing practically every civic organization of prominence have recorded their opposition to this measure. The Board of Aldermen, presumably representing the people of the various districts, have passed a resolution condemning any movement that would result in further encroachments on the park area, and private citizens have expressed themselves in letters to the daily press. What further evidence of the people's interest the Mayor could wish or reasonably expect is not apparent. Another reported feature of the hearing on this bill was the Mayor's warning that in case no site was agreed upon within six months, he would leave it to the Legislature to select a site in City Hall Park or anywhere else. Such sentiments hardly seem consistent with the doctrine of home rule to which the Mayor has heretofore pledged his unqualified support. Just why he should abandon any attempt to direct or control matters of purely local interest on account of inaction or inefficiency on the part of a Court House Board is not entirely plain. There is undoubtedly some way or means by which this matter can be handled to the satisfaction of those whose interest is not selfish and whose knowledge of the situation qualifies them to speak on the subject with authority; and the Mayor's expressed willingness to leave to an alien body the settlement of a question of such local importance, if the first attempt at solution is not entirely successful, will be a disappointment to many who have witnessed with admiration his numerous exhibitions of resourcefulness and persistency in efforts to obtain satisfactory results where he possessed a deep personal interest. It is to be hoped that the remarks attributed to Mayor Gaynor were either incorrectly reported or were simply made with the hope of spurring the Court House Board to some measure of activity.

THE 1912 CEMENT SHOWS

WHILE there is no gainsaying the intrinsic worth of the material of construction in which their interests lie, and no thought of detracting from its well-deserved popularity, the fact remains that, without the remarkable energy and re-

sourcefulness which have characterized the educational campaign carried on by the Portland cement manufacturers and users in the United States during the past ten years, the Portland cement industry would scarcely have attained its present degree of importance in the construction world. This spirit of aggressiveness is again exemplified by the announcement already made of the dates of Cement Shows to be held during 1912, together with a well written "Memorandum of the Aims and Objects of Cement Shows." The schedule includes the following:—Madison Square Garden, New York, January 21 to February 3; Coliseum, Chicago, February 21 to 28; Convention Hall, Kansas City, March 14 to 21. The value of these exhibitions in bringing into personal touch the architect, the manufacturer and the builder, and also teaching by actual example the uses and possibilities of various materials of construction, is universally recognized. In fact the functions and important purposes of the shows are many and varied. How well they have fulfilled them may be judged by the increased measure of success that has attended each succeeding exhibition. It is hoped that other industries, not entirely as a measure of self interest, but in the interest of building in general, will follow closely the policy regarding exhibitions adopted by the cement manufacturers and cement users.

The Current Architectural Press

(Continued from page 26)

Colleges," quite appropriately treats of the Southern colleges. This contribution has much interest aside from its architectural treatment of such well known seats of learning as the Universities of Virginia and North Carolina, and the oldest of Southern colleges, that of William and Mary, as Mr. Schuyler has supplied many interesting historical facts.

Mr. Aymar Embury II writes of Old New Orleans. The illustrations made with a camera by Mr. Embury are interesting, being from a point of view that appeals most to the architect and not merely picturesque bits that are so common with the general contributor.

The usual editorial notes and comments on current topics complete an interesting issue.

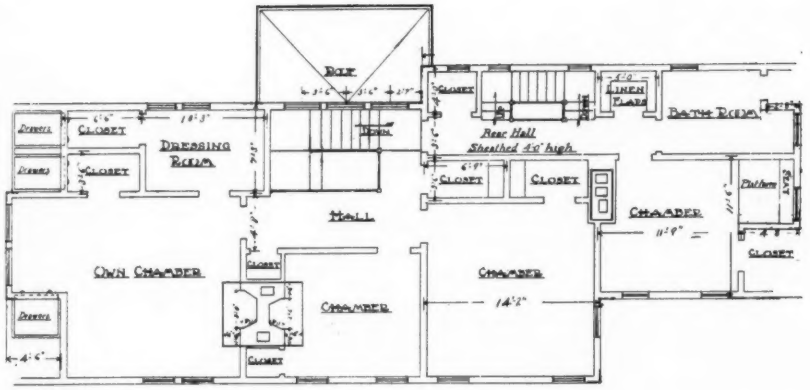
Architecture illustrates in its June issue, "The Royal Automobile Club," in Pall Mall, London, now very familiar to all our readers, a very well designed Shelter at Prospect Park, Brooklyn, by Messrs. Helmle & Huberty, a high school at Norfolk, Va., by Messrs. Neff & Thompson, an alteration of a country house at Chestnut Hill, Pa., by Mellor & Meigs, Architects, very thoroughly presented in The American Architect in March, 1911, and some country houses by Mr. Aymar Embury.

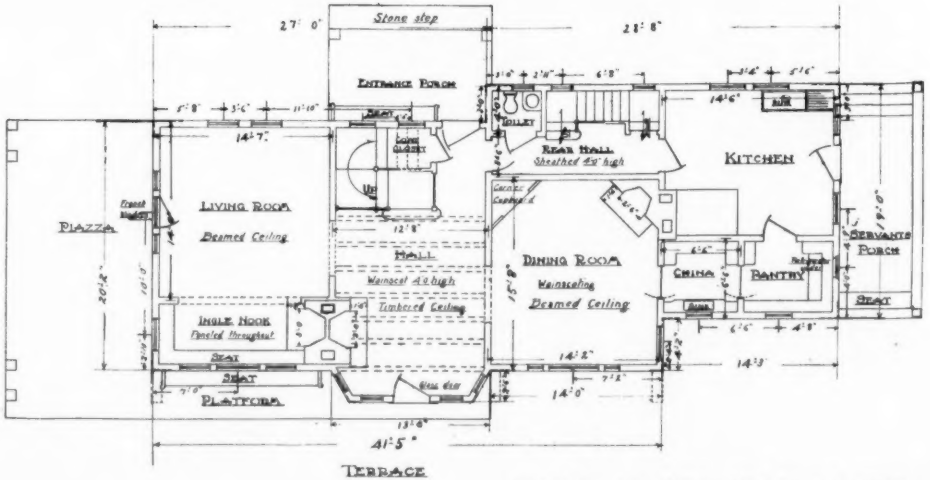
The most important work illustrated in this issue is the recently completed South Church Parish House and Rectory, on Park Avenue, New York, by Messrs. Cram, Goodhue & Ferguson. This dignified example of ecclesiastical architecture will repay close study.

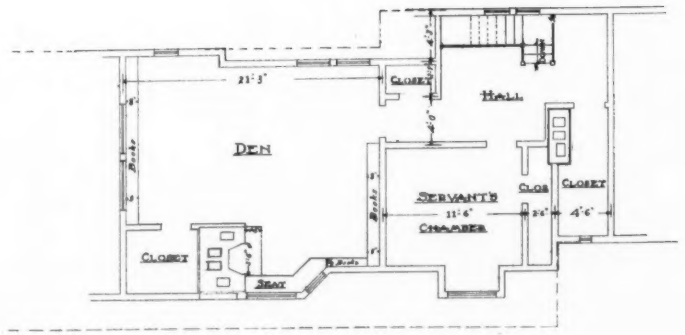
The text of *Architecture* for June contains the usual "Architectural Criticism" somewhat extended, and little else.

HOUSE OF MRS. WILLIAM HILL, DEDHAM, MASS.

MR. R. M. BAILEY, ARCHITECT







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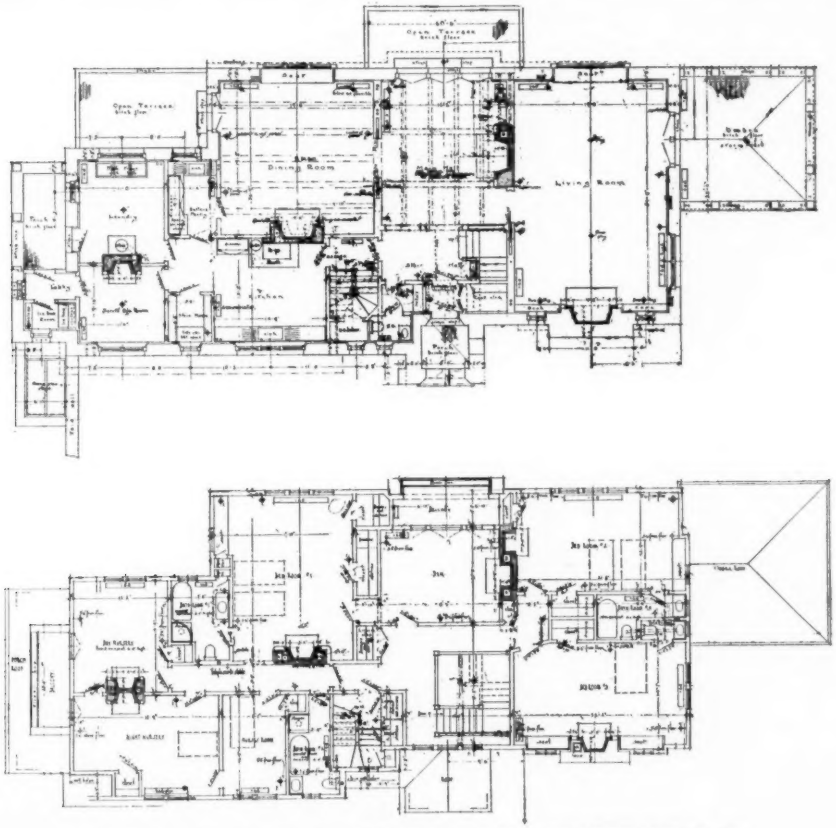

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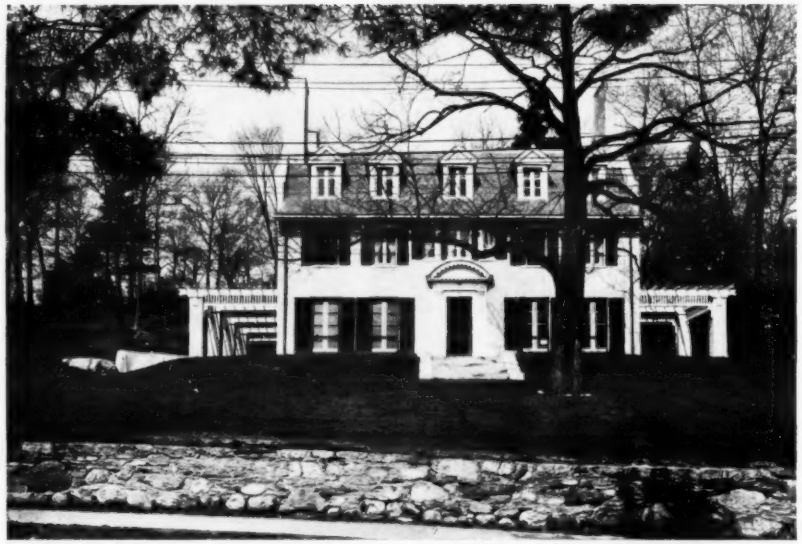
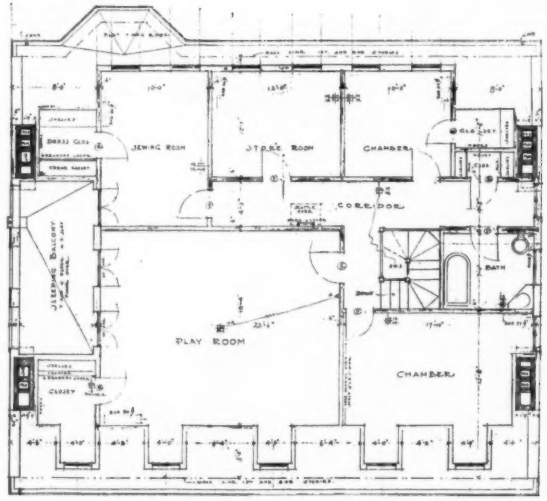
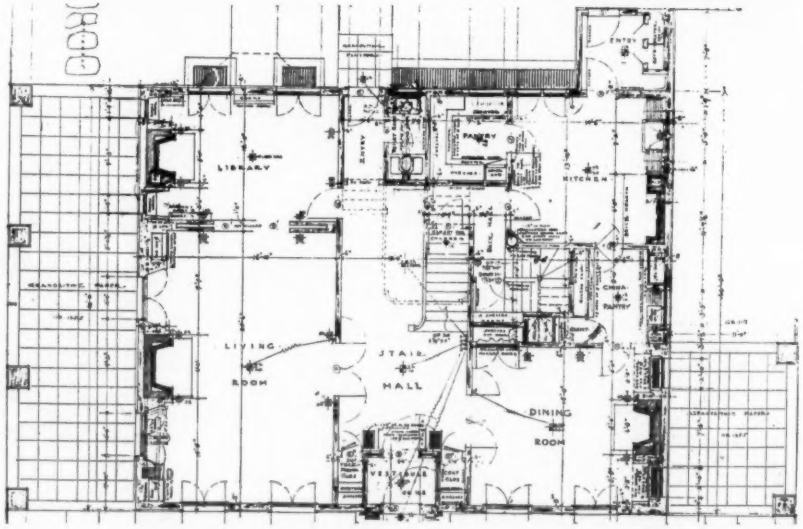
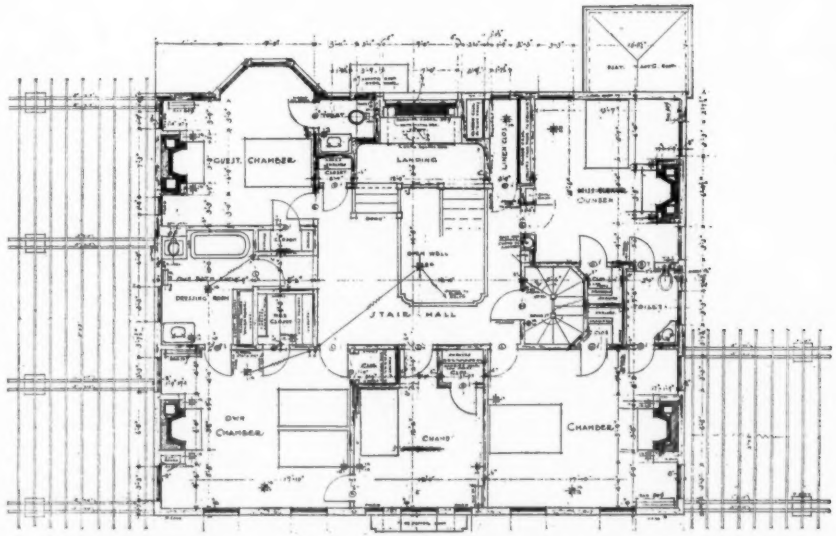
MR. HUBERT J. RIPLEY, ARCHITECT









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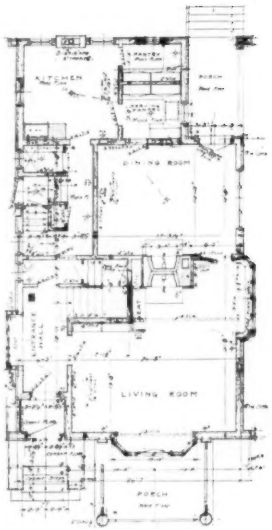
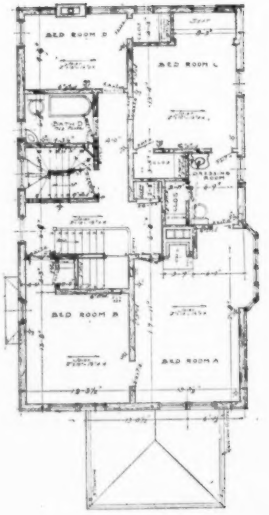
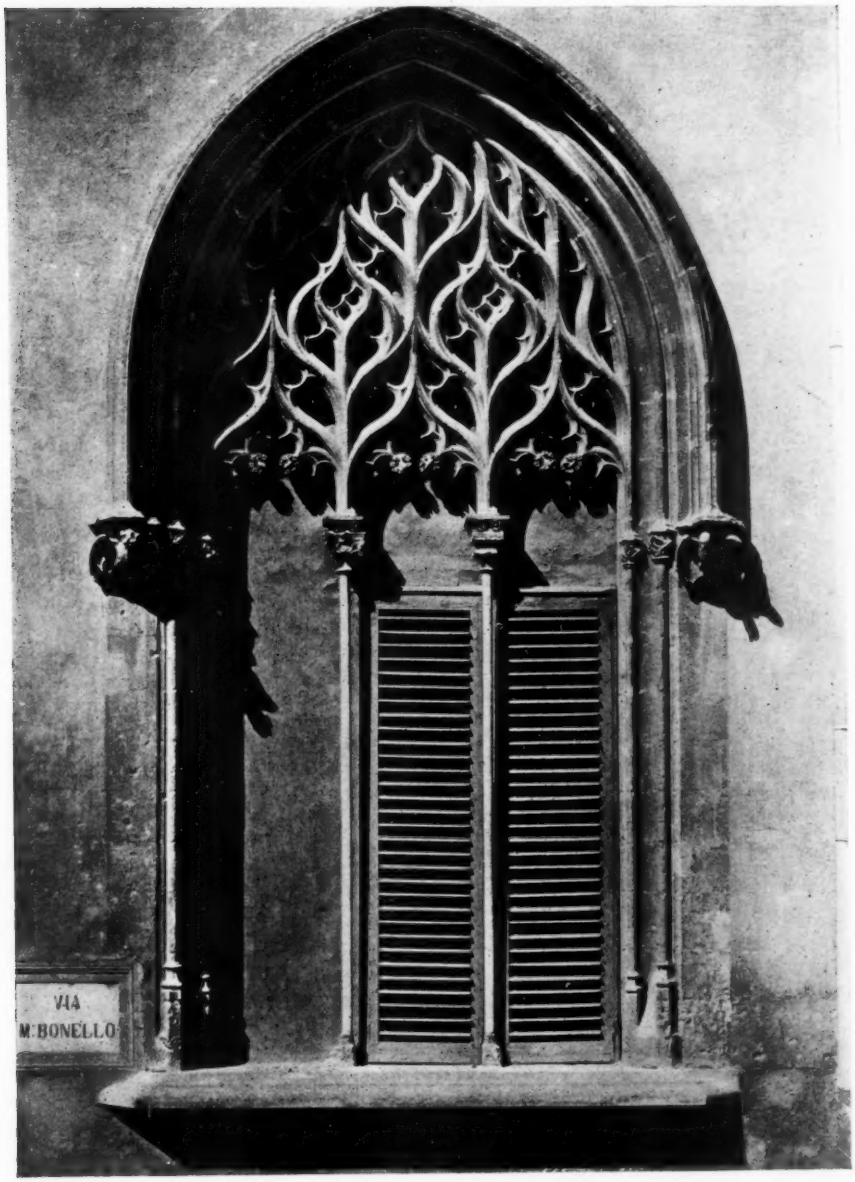


HOUSE OF
H. S. GRIFFIN, ESQ.,
BUFFALO, N. Y.

GREEN & WICKS
ARCHITECTS





DETAIL OF A WINDOW, PALERMO, ITALY